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Marilyn Chin

FROM *BORDER SONGS*

HOW DEEP IS THE RIVER OF GOD?

How deep is the river of God? They'll throw us in to drown.
How deep is our love for Mother? The river not deep enough.

Poetry is a vast orphanage, in which you and I are stars.
One robe, one bowl, silent pilgrimage, the river filled with martyrs.

Look for us, look for us, Mister Coyote, thirsting for our thighs and
fingerbones.
Wait for us, wait for us, Brethren Condor, to clean the sleep from our
eyes.

Guan guan cry the golden ospreys, in the borderlands we cry.
Our little eggs, little eggs grow into big ospreys

to lay little eggs again, *guan guan*.
Our miasma will ooze through the suburbs and gobble up their kind.
for Kimoko Hahn

I AM WAITING

I am waiting for my transformation
Breasts to grow fuller, lips to turn bolder
Myopia to clear
Eyelids to fold over

I am waiting for the #26 bus
Between Grant and California
One arrives, filled with noisy Chinese people
So, I wait for another

I am waiting for my prince on a white, white steed
I am waiting for the Fall
The Fall of Falls
A sleepless September

I am waiting for love, the love of all loves
I am waiting for my Lord
I am waiting to unlearn ecstasy
For the cloaca of utopia to gallop over us

I am waiting for the dead to reawaken
How beautiful her sleep, how beautiful

GET RID OF THE X

My shadow followed me to San Diego
 silently, she never complained.
No greencard, no identity pass,
 she is wedded to my fate.

The moon is a drunk and anorectic
 constantly reeling, changing weight.
My shadow dances grotesquely,
 resentful she can't leave me.

The moon mourns his unwritten novels,
 cries naked into the trees and fades.
Tomorrow, he'll return to beat me
 blue—again, again and again.

Goodbye Moon, goodbye Shadow.
 My husband, my lover, I'm late.
The sun will plunge through the window.
 I must make my leap of faith.

SONG OF THE GIANT CALABASH

At the market I bought a calabash
to make my father stew.
He spat and called it bitter,
his sputum seeded the ground.

Out came a giant calabash
shaped like Buddha's long head.
I baked it with honey and jujubes
to feed my father again.

"Useless girl! I said I hate calabash."
He slapped his bowl to the floor.
The rains poured down from heaven,
green mists and healing clouds blue.

Again another calabash
rounder than Buddha's mighty torso.
I mixed it with wild cat and agar
and called it "A Monk's Mock Lamb."

"Dead girl! I said I hate calabash,"
he burst into a thousand flames.
His head smashed open—well, like a calabash.
He perished, headlong into his bowl.

Faint light into a silent altar.
Blue, blue the mist of spring.
The sun shone through her hardy trellis
and danced on his empty bed.

This morning I cut my last calabash,
carved a large bottle-gourd of dreams.
I shall float her down the river
into Buddha's eternal dawn.